



Dana E. Blackwell  
Executive Director

## LOS ANGELES COUNTY COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

**COMMISSIONERS:**  
CAROL O. BIONDI, VICE CHAIR  
PATRICIA CURRY  
HON. JOYCE FAHEY  
PHALEN G. HUREWITZ, ESQ  
HELEN A. KLEINBERG  
DAISY MA, VICE CHAIR  
DR. LA-DORIS MCCLANEY  
SANDRA RUDNICK,  
ADELINA SORKIN, LCSW/ACSW  
DR. HARRIETTE WILLIAMS, CHAIR

### APPROVED MINUTES

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The General Meeting of the Commission for Children and Families was held on Monday, **December 13, 2004** in room 140 of the Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration, 500 West Temple Street, Los Angeles. **Please note that these minutes are intended as a summary and not as a verbatim transcription of events at this meeting.**

#### COMMISSIONERS PRESENT (Quorum Established)

Carol O. Biondi  
Joyce Fahey  
Phalen G. Hurewitz  
Helen Kleinberg  
Daisy Ma  
Dr. La-Doris McClaney  
Sandra Rudnick  
Adelina Sorkin  
Dr. Harriette Williams

#### COMMISSIONERS ABSENT (Excused/Unexcused)

Patricia Curry

#### APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

The agenda for the December 13, 2004 meeting was unanimously approved.

#### APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes for the November 15, 2004 general meeting were unanimously approved.  
The minutes for the October 18, 2004 Annual Retreat were unanimously approved as amended.

## **DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

- Dr. Sanders reported that the Alliance for Children's Rights sent a letter to the Board of Supervisors (Board) and provided testimony at the December 7<sup>th</sup> Board meeting with respect to two issues. First, that they believe the Department is not legally placing children with relatives when they are already living with the relative on an informal basis or inappropriately referring relatives to probate court to seek custody. In both instances supportive services are not provided. Second, they allege that either Hotline or ER investigations, mostly with relatives, are not being completed appropriately or that the appropriate interventions taking place. Dr. Sanders stated that some policy changes have already been made to deter this practice. The Department will investigate. A report is due back to the Board in late January 2005.
- Dr. Sanders stated that the P3 Project has been very successful and has exceeded his expectations. The Department is exploring options to expand the program. Eight to 10 children likely have a permanent placement that would not have materialized without the concentrated focus on investigating permanency options that the program provides.
- Four community meetings have taken place about the Promoting Safe and Stable Families RFP. Dr. Sanders stated that consistent feedback has questioned the way in which the Department has created different boundaries for family support and adoption support which then places the burden on the family to determine which service best fit their needs. With this in mind, the RFP will be amended to encourage the creation of a seamless system by aligning service providers so families have a single point of entry.
- In reference to the Department's letter to the Board regarding the workgroup reports, Dr. Sanders shared that input provided by Commissioners was incorporated. He and Chair Williams will meet to strategize about how best to get the information to the Board beyond the letter.
- Dr. Sanders suggested that the Commission be provided an update on Katie A. He reported that five areas of focus have been identified and that Department Deputies and individual panel members are working together to develop a work plan in each of these areas. The areas that have been identified include: 1) reducing the number of children under the age of 12 in group home care; 2) development of a finance plan that focuses on reinvesting dollars that are saved from group home care back into services for children. Representatives from the Department of Mental Health (DMH) have been included in this work. Commissioner Hurewitz asked if training is an area under examination. Dr. Sanders responded in the affirmative, stating that training is incorporated into three of four areas.

Chair Williams asked how the Commission can evaluate training over time. Dr. Sanders said that the Department has a huge investment in the core academy training which is where the majority of the Department's training resources have focused.

Recommendations over time have been made to improve the academy. Specifically, a report issued in 2002 provided a number of recommendations. Dr. Sanders was unsure how many of those recommendations have been incorporated. Currently, new staff are evaluating their experience in the academy training. He admitted that the evaluation is limited as it does not examine culture change of the organization. An examination of the supervisor's role in staff training has not taken place. Dr. Sanders is unsure if there is any type of evaluation which takes place after training on a major policy change. Commissioners made suggestions about the inclusion of supervisors, and upper level managers in on going training and the use of performance evaluations to reinforce the need to implement and adhere to policy and procedures.

- Dr. Sanders said that although the Department looks to relatives as an optimal placement option, the least amount of support is provided to this class of care providers. Currently the Department provides relatives with support through the existing Kinship division and through regulatory activities provided by the ASFA division. He announced that these two divisions will be joined to create one organizational structure within the Department dedicated to relatives. The intent is to provide a more comprehensive level of support to kinship providers. Ultimately, the Department would like kinship services to be community based through eight kinship resource centers throughout the county. This new division will have approximately 80 staff and planning for its structure is underway. Commissioner Fahey suggested that a school resource officer is added to the support staff due to the many educational challenges the youth and the relatives encounter.

Vice Chair Biondi asked if relatives were accessing the Children's Trust Fund. Deputy Russ Carr said that they are on a limited basis and indicated that it is a very cumbersome process. Vice Chair Biondi requested that a presentation be provided to the Commission on the Children's Trust Fund. Such a presentation would include the amount of money in the fund, how it is accessed, and who are the recipients of the funds.

Commissioner Hurewitz asked if relatives are reimbursed at the same level as foster care parents, especially in light of the fact that their homes are being approved at the foster care level. Chair Williams stated that relatives are not being reimbursed at the same level and suggested that Joan Smith come to the Commission to provide information on this issue. Dr. Sanders further stated that the structure for reimbursement put into place at the state level presents challenges. He explained that reimbursement is based on the care provider's eligibility and not the child's eligibility. Commissioner Sorkin indicated that part of the challenge for relatives is that reimbursement is not immediately available to relatives.

## **CHAIR'S REPORT**

- Chair Williams provided the Commission with a brief history of the progress on relative care issues and the many accomplishments that have taken place. Although the relative care committee was initially resistant to the idea of combining the ASFA

division and the kinship division, the opportunity to change the way in which staff perceived relatives and the way in which they worked with relatives helped the group to accept this concept. She added that this division will be solely dedicated to the issues of kinship and is worthy of celebration. Chair Williams also announced the opening of a kinship resource center in SPA 6 underwritten by the Casey Foundation.

The Commission reviewed the draft mission statement for the new kinship division. Suggestions and amendments were provided. These changes will be taken back to the relative care committee for review. Commissioner Fahey emphasized the need for a legislative remedy to the disparity of financial reimbursement. Dr. Sanders indicated that Joan Smith will continue work on this issue.

- Chair Williams acknowledged the resignations of both Christina Mattingly and Brenda Galloway and announced that Jana Cooley will return in January 2005.
- Chair Williams asked the workgroup chairs to develop an executive summary for their respective reports to develop a combined report to the Board. Dana Blackwell stated that she believed the Annual Report would be a foundation for such a report. Chair Williams suggested a review of the Annual Report and asked Commissioner Kleinberg coordinate the workgroup chairs to develop the document. Commissioner Sorkin suggested that the document highlight a continuum of care and is in step with what the County is already doing in these areas.
- Chair Williams stated that the structure of the Education Coordinating Council (ECC) has been established and acknowledged Commissioner Kleinberg's involvement in that effort. Commissioner Kleinberg explained that the ECC will include county, city and school district representatives to discuss ways in which they can partner to improve the educational achievement for foster youth. She stated that Sharon Watson has led this effort with financial support from the county and the Department. The membership of the ECC will also include high level and mid level administrators as well as a wide variety of stakeholders including parents, foster parents and relative providers. She stated that much work needs to be done to educate participants about the need for focus in this area. In response to Commissioner Sorkin, Commissioner Kleinberg stated that there will be focus on children age 0-4 and membership includes First 5 LA and Headstart. She further commented on the vast amount of work that needs to be done and that the group will need to set both short term and long term goals to satisfy funders. The first meeting will take place in January 2005.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

Commissioner Kleinberg requested that the agenda include a short discussion on child fatality notices. She stated that the Commission office has received many fatality notices on very young children, not all under the supervision of the Department, who are dying within the first 3 to 8 months of their lives. From the prevention perspective, she suggested that there is a review of all of the child deaths in the county to determine how many young children have died within the last year and the circumstances surrounding

their deaths to determine if there are any patterns. Commissioner Fahey suggested that this information might be obtained from ICAN's child death review team. Ms. Blackwell, Helen Berberian and Commissioner Fahey are to work on this issue and arrange a presentation to the Commission. Commissioner Kleinberg would like the emphasis to be on health as she believes it is part of the prevention effort.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

**Agenda Building - January to June 2005:** Chair Williams organized the Workgroup Chairs and the Commission members to determine the dates when their workgroups would report back to the Commission on their progress between January and June. The Commission also determined when other topics as agreed upon at the annual retreat would be scheduled on the agenda.

Commissioner Sorkin asked for a presentation on the Department's budget prior to the budget hearing with the Board. Dr. Sanders suggested that the Commission receive such a report from the Department's Deputies in February. She further asked for a presentation on how the Department evaluates programs and its respective contracts. Ms. Blackwell suggested that Point of Engagement as a beginning place to focus on for such an evaluation to understand program efficacy and child outcomes. This item was scheduled.

In addition to each workgroup incorporating the issues of data, training and mental health in the reports, Commissioner Kleinberg requested a separate presentation on training and spoke to its importance with respect to the Department's efforts to improve outcomes for children and families and the much needed culture change within the Department. She agreed to work with Ms. Blackwell to develop specific questions to be addressed at a scheduled presentation. Dr. Sanders suggested that a presentation on training be centered on the training provided to staff on specific area such as concurrent planning. The Commission agreed to this approach.

Additional requests for presentations included group home contracts and drug and alcohol programs. Both topics were scheduled.

Presentations were scheduled and a list will be provided to each Commissioner prior to the January 31, 2005 general Commission meeting.

Commissioner Kleinberg asked how planning for the use of the IVE waiver funds is happening. She expressed concern that the Department does not have the scope of information about families to allocate the funds in a manner that truly meets their needs. Dr. Sanders agreed with that assessment and said that it will take time to be able to identify the real needs of families. Commissioner Sorkin asked about the impact of the approval of the IVE waiver on ILP funding. Dr. Sanders suggested that this issue be addressed in the presentation on ILP.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no request for public comment.

**MEETING ADJOURNED**